

## A SYNTHESIS OF THE EAST AND WEST IN CHITRA BANERJEE

### DIVAKARUNI'S THE MISTRESS OF SPICES

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#### ABSTRACT

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, a multi-faceted personality in the realm of Indo-American literature, has been recognized as a short story writer, novelist, poet and a community activist as well. The present research work entitled "A Synthesis of The East and West in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's The Mistress of Spices", is related to the examination of the philosophical and psychological cognition of the desires and disillusionments on the part of the protagonist of the novel The Mistress of Spices. For the cognition of this aspect the assimilation of Buddhist ideas into psychoanalytic theory has been done as this process of amalgamation points out contemporary cultural values, tensions, and problems and culminates into the positive results or the good ideas for the improvement of life. In other words it can also be stated that through the cross cultural comparison a study has been developed between Buddhism and Psychoanalysis, with the objective of exploring desired aspect in the selected novel, in which the two traditions also can complement one another.

**KEYWORDS:** Desire, Illusion, Suffering, Disillusionment, Freedom, Liberation Etc

#### INTRODUCTION

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is an exceptionally creative writer who uses her ingenious faculties with exceptional insight and displays a remarkable range of experience and imagination in perceiving the reality of her surroundings. She has produced a number of books which are set in both India and America and feature Indian born women split between two distinct cultural values. Divakaruni has gained increasing visibility, not only in quantity but also in craft. As Alexander Flora states that the "Novelists use a combination in varying proportions of what they have experienced what they have discovered and what they have imagined" (Flora 12). When she was asked, "How do you feel about the label *Asian American*? While answering this question, Divakaruni firmly shows the integrity of her personality:

I have no problem with the Asian American identity. As a writer, I have many identities, and I'm relatively comfortable with all of them. Overall, I think of myself as a writer, beyond all other categories. That is our most important identity. The other identities of course influence us and make us who we are. One must be a writer on some universal level beyond all these labels, which, after all, we put on ourselves. I feel happy about being a part of the Asian American community. I've learned a great deal from Asian American writers. We share many of the same concerns. (Cheung 145)

As the objective of this study is to explore her selected fictional work, to fulfil the desired aspect i.e. “A Synthesis of The East and West in *The Mistress of Spices*” still unexplored and thus here lays the relevance and importance of the work. The present study focuses on the philosophical and psychological cognition of the desires and disillusion on the part of the protagonist of the novel entitled *The Mistress of Spices*. Essentially the philosophies of the East and West regarding the human behaviour and instincts or more peculiarly of Buddhism and that of the Psychoanalysis have been made the foundation of the study for this kind of cognition. The psychological features of Buddhist theory have been presented in terms of the system of Psychoanalysis and the central study pertaining to desires and disillusion will be concluded by presenting the therapeutic structure of Buddhist psychology in a comparative perspective. The basic reason for the integration of this extensive theory can be summarised thus:

Religious systems play the dual roles of integrating the individual with the community and of providing a system of communally held symbols and rituals that heal individuals who experience emotional distress. These traditional systems of healing function by giving some sense of meaning to the individual's suffering and by reintegrating the alienated individual into the community. This process of healing involves an act of faith and commitment to the values of the community, and through that commitment, one experiences salvation. (Safran 3)

Not only this P. Reiff, the author of *The Triumph of the Therapeutic: Use of Faith after Freud*, also argues for the adoption of the theory of psychoanalysis that it is not a therapy of commitment but rather an approach that liberates people from the type of commitment required by traditional religion and other social institutions. He further asserts that for Freud the goal of psychoanalysis was not to help the individual to recommit himself or herself to the values of the community but rather to learn to manage the strains of living as an individual detached from community. While the psychology of Buddhism is different from that of any field of psychological enquiry pursued for its own sake, for the Buddha pursued theoretical questions only when they had a bearing on the predicament of the suffering man. The psychology of Buddhism is primarily designed to answer the questions like what are the causes of suffering (*dukkha*) and what is the way out of it. The Buddha lays down the path of the psychological and spiritual transformation which is necessary for the emergence of intuitive knowledge. As one of the Buddhist scriptures entitled *Mahima nikaya* describes that:

Logical clarification is useful only as a preliminary step, for there are certain views which can have the appearance of rationality and yet be false. After a process of logical clarification, one should develop the powers of self-analysis, mindfulness and penetrative insight. An understanding of the psychological basis of wrong beliefs arrived at in this way will help a person to control his desires, eradicate bias and develop the foundations of insight. It is at this stage that he will see the world in new way and experience a ‘transformation of perspective’. (De Silva 9)

Herein the psychology of Buddhism has been mingled with its philosophy to achieve the desired purpose which is to deal with the alleviation and diagnosis of the human suffering or mental illness. As The first of Buddha's "Four Noble Truths" declares that all existence is subject to suffering and the second states the cause of suffering i.e., the *trishna* (Sanskrit) or *tanha* (Pali), the clinging and grasping that makes us want to get things and hold onto them. In general, Desire is a sense of longing for a person or object or hoping for an outcome and the same sense can also be expressed by emotions such as "craving" or "hankering". In *The Mistress of Spices* the apparent and universal nature of desires has been depicted by Divakaruni, when Tilo says:

And in the corners accumulated among dustballs, exhaled by those who have  
entered here, the desires. Of all things in my store they are the most ancient.  
For even here in this new land America, this city which prides itself on being  
no older than a heartbeat, it is the same things we want again and again. (4)

*The Mistress of Spices* is a novel that weaves magic, memory, and immigrant life into a tale of love and survival. In this novel, set in sacred, mythical frame, the conflict is between desire and duty in the life of protagonist, Tilo. The novel starts with these introductory words made by Tilottama that, "I am a Mistress of Spices. I can work the others too. . . . It is not allowed for Mistresses to touch those who come to us. To upset the delicate axis of giving and receiving on which our lives are held precarious" (MS 3-6). Plato in *The Republic* has argued that individual desires must be postponed in the name of the higher ideal. This ideal notion can also be seen when Tilo reminds herself, " 'Remember,' said the Old One, the First Mother, when she trained us on the island. 'You are not important. No Mistress is. What is important is the store. And the spices'. " (MS 5). In *The Mistress of Spices*, Tilo, also asserts that she has abandoned all the worldly attractions, "for this store, where I have brought together everything you need in order to be happy" (MS 7). The desires surges through the whole life of the protagonist as from Nayantara to Tilottama at different stages and conditions, she craves for the things: in childhood the position in family, in youth the yearning for beauty and finally the need of 'love'. De Silva also discusses that, "Desires find temporary satisfaction, but they surge up again and again, sometimes seeking new objects of exploration" (De Silva 36). And it can be depicted by the dialogue made by the Mistress: "I would turn my face into my pillow to escape the emptiness opening like a black hand inside my chest. I would focus my attention on my discontent until it glittered sharp as a hook, and then I would cast it out over the ocean in search of my pirates" (MS 17).

Christopher Alan Anderson in his book entitled *The Metaphysics of Sex ...in a Changing World!* assembles all the prominent thoughts about desire made by great thinkers and philosophers and the book reveals that Aristotle in *De Anima* claims that "desire is implicated in animal interactions and the propensity of animals to motion; at the same time, he acknowledges that reasoning also interacts with desire" (27) . When a person desires something or someone, their sense of longing is excited by the enjoyment or the thought of the item or person, and they want to take actions to obtain their goal. The motivational aspect of desire has long been noted by philosophers; Hobbes (1588–1679) who asserts that the "fundamental motivation of all human action is the desire for pleasure" (27). While Spinoza had a view which contrasted with Hobbes, in that "he saw natural desires as a form of bondage" that are not chosen by a person of their own free will. Hume claimed that "desires and passions are non-cognitive, automatic bodily responses, and he argued that reasoning is capable only of devising means to ends set by [bodily] desire" (27). Buddha's teaching suggests that "Tanha" is a kind of

fidgiting that cannot keep still, or an attempt to clutch and hold onto water. Desire is not lack, which suggests negativity. It is affirmative in its state of movement and change. How the desires are important for the continual of life also has been quoted by the author as she has used the spice of fenugreek to render this aspect, "Listen to fenugreek's song: *I am fresh as river wind to the tongue, planting desire in a plot turned barren. . . . I fenugreek who renders the body sweet again, ready for loving.*" (MS 47). Tilo is a spice-Mistress, the healer who is supposed to lead an ascetic life by helping people with her knowledge of the magical properties of spices in her dusty little shop in Oakland, California. Buddhism insists on the extinction of desires as is quoted in Ross Thompson's book entitled *Buddhist Christianity* that, "The first law is no desire. Your heart seeks one thing after another, creating a multitude of problems. You must not allow them to flare up. This cuts us off from the roots of Peace and Joy" (Thompson 95). According to the early Buddhist scriptures also, the monks should generate desire for the sake of fostering skilful qualities and abandoning unskilful ones. The intricate process of being a Mistress and abandoning all the desires behind for the service of the people has been described by the protagonist, Tilo, in the novel as:

When we had passed the ceremony of purification, when we were ready to leave the island and meet our separate destinies, the Old One said, 'Daughters it is time for me to give you your new names. For when you came to this island you left your old names behind, and have remained nameless since. 'But let me ask you one last time. Are you certain you wish to become Mistresses? It is not too late to choose an easier life. Are you ready never to give up your young bodies, to take on age and ugliness and unending service? Ready never to step out of the places where you are set down, store or school or healing house? Are you ready never to love any but the spices again? (MS 40)

The term 'motivation' is a general one that covers three aspects of behaviour: states that motivate behaviour, behaviour motivated by these states and the goals of such behaviour. All three aspects may be regarded as stages in a cycle. The terms like need, want, motive, drive, etc., refer to some inner condition of the organism that initiates and directs its behaviour towards a goal. Some of the goals are of a positive nature, goals that individuals approach; others of a negative nature, which individuals try to avoid. Where the motivating states have a clear physiological base, the goals are relatively fixed- as in the need for physiological base, the goals are relatively fixed- as in the need for sleep or food- whereas there will be a greater degree of flexibility and variation in the case of the desire for fame, status, position, etc. The focus of the philosophical and psychological investigations of the Buddha being the predicament of human suffering (*dukkha*), Buddhist psychology of motivation is directly concerned with the factors that lead to human unrest, tension, anxiety and suffering in general. The psychological analysis found in the discourses of the Buddha, especially in relation to motivation, is deeply embedded in the desire to uncover the roots of unrest and to depict a positive path towards happiness.

The basic springs of motivation are accordingly analysed into three wholesome (*kusala mula*) and three unwholesome ones (*akusala mula*); of the unwholesome roots, *lobha* rendered as greed or lust, generates the positive 'approach desires'; *dosa* generates the 'avoidance desires' in the form of hatred and resentment; and *moha*, rendered as delusion, creates confusion in the mind. While the unwholesome springs of action generate unrest and conflict, their opposite charity (*alobha*), compassionate love (*adosa*) and wisdom (*amoha*) lead to inner happiness within the individual and harmony at the interpersonal level. Tilo also undergoes the same situation and her motivational roots shift from the unwholesome to wholesome ones, as her primary phase which also reflects her sense of self, has been depicted in the novel:

They do not know, of course. That I am not old that this seeming-body I took on in Shampati's fire is not mine. I claim its creases and gnarls no more than water claims the ripples that wrinkle it. They do not see, under the hooded lids, the eyes which shine for a moment- I need no forbidden mirrors (for mirrors are forbidden to Mistresses) to tell me this- like dark fire. The eyes which alone are my own. (MS 5)

Within this framework the Buddha focuses attention more on the drives with the psychological orientation and less on those with a clear physiological base. Even in the base of certain basic physiological needs, under certain circumstances a need could take the form of greed. When basic needs go beyond their biological function and take possession of the whole personality, such obsessions and attachments overpower man and cripple his personality. Getting allured by the charm of the bougainvillea girls in her shop Tilo, the spice mistress also feels as:

A desire leaps clawed like a tiger from its hidden place in me. I will boil petal of rose with camphor, grind in peacock feathers. Say the words of making and be rid of this disguise I put on when I left the island. This disguise falling like old snakeskin around my feet, and I rising red and new and wet-gleaming. Draped in a veil of diamonds. Tilottama most beautiful, to whom these girls will be like mud scraped from the feet before one crosses the threshold. (MS 49)

According to the final picture of mind which Freud worked out, it can be said that man is impelled by three basic instincts, the sexual instinct, the ego instinct and a self-destructive urge. Freud used the word 'libido' c (which conceptualized the sex drive) in a very broad sense: on the other hand it included all bodily pleasure inclusive of all genital contact, and on the other hand feelings of tenderness and affection. Tilo yearns for the bodily pleasures opposing all the restrictions and says that, "All those things you warned me against, First Mother, I wanted them. His grateful lips innocent and ardent in the centre of my palm, his sorrows shimmering like fireflies alighted in my hair" (MS 28). The word 'libido' comes from the Latin word for 'lust' which, as pointed out by Carl Jung, has etymological affinities with the Buddhist concept of *lobha* (greed).

But I who have never been held. Not by father or mother. Not by my sister Mistresses. Not even by the Old One, not like this, heart to thudding heart. I Tilo, the child who could never cry, the woman who never would. I smile through wet lashes as the smell of his skin fills me, the warm ruffle of his breath on my lashes. My bones are melting in this desire to be always so held, I who never thought I would want a man's arms to protect me. (MS 192)

Later Freud came to accept that even self-love (referred to by him as 'narcissism') was a libidinal complement of the egoistic part of the self-preservative instinct. These libidinal drives could be gratified, repressed or handled by such defence mechanisms as reaction-formation, displacement, identification, etc. The repressed impulses remain active at the unconscious level. Repressed conflicts, though pushed out of awareness, remain active at a deeper level and create the conditions for the emergence of tensions and anxiety. The drive for self-preservation expresses itself in many ways as the desire for fame, power, status, and admiration by others, narcissism, etc.

However immediate gratification of the senses is not always possible and often detrimental. The individual has to learn to postpone gratification, renounce a certain amount of pleasure and respect society, law and morality. Thus the 'reality principle' cannot be completely violated in the search for pleasure. The libido is the part of the life instinct, what

Freud termed as “eros”. In opposition to this pleasure drive of *eros*, Freud put forward the *thanatos*, or death instinct.

Freud also analysed the personality into three components: the Id, a reservoir of impulses; the Ego, which controls the impulses in the light of realities; and the Super-ego, which represents the demands of morality, religion and man’s inner conscience. These three levels of personality can also be defined as: Ego- the conscious, the Super Ego- the conscience and the Id- which is the unconscious. The unconscious is the part of mind, which is beyond the consciousness. The unconscious has in spite of its “pushed away”, a major role in human lives and actions. Non-admitted and inexpressible desires, unresolved conflicts, traumatic pasts and inarticulate fears constitute it. This unconscious therefore contains those elements that cannot be expressed in civilised society. They are “repressed or “sublimated”. Repression is the Freudian term for the forgetting or ignoring of these fundamental fantasies and fears.

“You’ll be tempted,” said the Old One before I left. ‘You especially with your lava hands that want so much from the world. Your lava heart flying too easily to hate, to envy, to love-passion. Remember why you were given your power” (MS 49). In Buddhism it has been stated that the emotions like greed, envy, jealousy, pride and fear- all drive significance from an interpersonal context, and if we do not want to spread the seeds of discord, we have to begin with ourselves and then try to foster the same spirit in others. It is upon these foundations of healthy ethical values that meaningful social structures can then be built. Thus it may be said that, while presenting the necessary psychological foundations for the building of a healthy society, the Buddha cuts across the somewhat exaggerated dichotomy between the individual and society. It is said, “Protecting oneself one protects others and protecting others one protects oneself (*attanam rakkhanto param rakkhati, param rakhanto attanam rakkhati*)” (De Silva 4)

It’s my desire I want to fulfil, for once. It would be so easy. A *tola* of lotus root burned in evening with prishniparni, a few words spoken, and he would not be able to keep away. Yes it would be him standing across from me and not be able to keep away. Yes it would be *him* standing across from me and not this fat man in round rimmed glasses who is telling me I’m all out of chana besan. If I wanted, he would see not this old body but what I wished, curve of mango breast to cup in one’s palm, long lean line of eucalyptus thigh. I would call on the others, *abhrak* and *amlaki* to remove wrinkles and blacken hair and firm the sagging flesh. (MS 82)

The concept of *Kama-tanha* has a very broad usage which goes beyond mere ‘sexuality’ as such; it is basically the craving for ‘sensuous gratification’ rather than ‘sexual gratification’. The *Suttas* refer to two significant terms, *pancakamaguna* and *kama-raga*: *pancakamaguna* refers to the five types of pleasure objects obtained by the eye, ear, nose, tongue and body, *kama-raga* refers to the desires and passions of sensual nature. Thus the term *pancakamagunika-raga* refers to the fact that in a human being there is deep-seated proclivity for the enjoyment of the five senses. As Tilo says that, “Fluid fills my mouth in a hot sweet rush. In all my lives before, fortune-teller and pirate queen and apprentice of spices, I have never seen a naked man, never desired to see it” (MS 73). In a still broader sense, *kama-tanha* may be regarded as the ‘pleasure principle’, as the term used in, for instance, the work of Freud: the natural proneness in man to seek pleasure and be repelled by pain. It is important emphasise that the drive for sensuous gratification goes beyond genital or otherwise specifically sexual pleasure and accounts for such manifestations as the need for diversion, the craving for excitement and the search for novelty. *Kama* in the context of Buddhism is the enjoyment of the five senses, and ‘sexuality’ is only one of the expressions of man’s sensuous nature. “Lonely American, though my body is a sudden soaring whenever I think of you, if you are to come to me, it will have to be your own desire” (MS 84).

There are two basic standpoints to the enjoyment of pleasure in Buddhism. From one standpoint, the Buddha describes the ills besetting the pursuit of pleasure in general, but from another standpoint he distinguishes pleasure obtained by illegitimate means, pleasures obtained within the legitimate restraints of a limit and the excessive craving for them, between harmless pleasures and perverted lust, and so on. Sexual control in the sense of perfect celibacy and abstinence is limited to the monks. There is, however, one thing common to both standpoints- the search for pleasure as the only ideal in life is not possible within either standpoint. A life of pure sensuality without any ethical consideration is what the Buddha condemns as *kamasukhallikanuyoga* (the way of sensuality).

The voice of the spice is in my ears, *Use everything. Mouth and hand, yes, nails and teeth, flutter of eyelash against his skin, that special look in your eye. Give and take back, teasing. As did the great courtesans in the courts of Indra the godking. Let him be discover of the land that you are, mountain and lake and cityscape. Let him carve out roads where none went before. Let him enter finally where you are deepest and most unknown, thick vines, jaguar cry, the dizzying odour of rajanigandha, the wild tuberose, flower of the bridal night. For isn't love the illusion that you will open yourselves totally to each other, suffering no distance to be kept. O makaradwaj, why do you say illusion. I am willing to give this man all my secrets, my past and my present both. . .* 'Tilo,' cries Raven urgently, pulling my hips into him, again, again, bone to bone, till I feel the hot release take us both. Till we are one body and many bodies and no body all at once" (MS 288-89).

The main focus of Buddhist psychological analysis was human suffering and that the Buddha was directly concerned with the factors that lead to human unrest, tension and anxiety. It is this in the context that the deep-rooted instinct for sensuous gratification has to be analysed. Sensuality as an expression of craving is the very base and source of suffering (*dukkha*). The origin of suffering (*dukkha-samudaya*) is traced to craving (*tanha*). Craving is a factor leading to rebirth (*ponobhavika*), it is accompanied by lust and self-indulgence (*nandi-raga*), it seeks for temporary satisfaction 'now here, now there' (*tatratatrabhinandani*) (Little 17). Tilo becomes subjected to craving completely and reflects "I think, Don't go please. You don't have to say anything you don't want to. Just stay with me awhile but I cannot speak them, the asking words that would lay bare my need-full heart. I who have until now been the giver of gifts, the Mistress of desires" (MS 153).

The question is raised as to where 'craving takes its rise' and where 'it has a dwelling'. First it is said that craving has its rise and dwelling in the material things which are pleasant and dear to us: the sense of sight, sense of hearing, of smell, taste, touch and imagination; things seen heard, smelt, tasted, touched and recalled in memory are dear and pleasant. This discussion of the excitation of the senses made in terms of *rupa* (material things) is continued in terms of consciousness, sensory stimuli, feeling, perceptions, intentions, conceptual and discursive thinking. This analysis is not limited to sensuous gratification but holds true of the other forms of craving. However, in the final analysis, it is not the existence of the sense-organs or the impact of sense impressions that is emphasised, but the persistence of desire and lust. The eye is not the bond of objects, nor are objects bond of eye, but desire and lust that arise owing to these two. The concepts of *kama-raga* (sensuous passion), *kama upadana* (sense clinging) and *kama-asava* (the canker of sensuous desire) refer to the persistence and upsurge of the craving for sense- gratification. Man's craving may be excited by stimuli either in the form of somatic factors or sensory stimuli, but its roots are deep-rooted psychological nature. When a person's passions are roused, there emerges a kind of tenacity to hold on to these pleasures. This is the emergence of clinging (*upadana*). Unless there is the persistence of clinging, excitation of the sense organs is not sufficient to rouse the individual

to activity. Though clinging emerges always with craving as a condition, clinging as such works on a far deeper level and once a person clings to pleasure-giving objects, some latent tendencies (*anusaya*) will already have been excited. The pursuit of pleasure is fed by such undercurrents.

The word *tanha*, as implied by the metaphor of ‘thirst’, with which it is often associated, implies a constant state of striving. In spite of discontinuous states of satisfaction, the unquenchable thirst re-emerges. When obstruction sets in there is frustration and anger, and if society lays down taboos there is retreat into the realms of fantasy. But deeper than all these outcomes of the pleasure drive is the sense of boredom and ennui that overcomes the man who has succumbed to the search for pleasure as his one dominating goal. Pleasures also contain within them the seed of decay and loss, and thus within the incessant search for pleasure as his one dominating goal. Pleasures also contain within them the seeds of decay and loss, and thus within the incessant search for pleasure, delight turns into melancholy. The deeper psychological aspects of boredom, melancholy, dissatisfaction and restlessness are all contained within the Buddhist concept of *dukkha*. The psychology of *tanha* cannot be separated from the concept of *dukkha* (suffering).

This is my atonement. Willingly I undergo it. Not because I have sinned, for I acted out of love, in which is no sinning. Were I to do it over, I would do the same again. Step across the forbidden threshold of the store to take Geeta in her glittering tower mango pickles and reassurance. Hold Lalita’s hand steadfast in mine and tell her she is deserving of joy. I would give again to Haroun lotus root for a love that is worth more than his immigrant dream. And again, yes, I would make myself as ravishing as Tilottama, dancer of the gods, for Raven’s pleasure. But I know that rules broken must be paid for. Balance upset must be restored. For one to be happy, another must take upon herself the suffering. (MS 298)

According to the psychology of motivation in Buddhism, the approach desires generated by greed take a dual form— the drive for self-preservation and the drive for sensuous gratification –while the avoidance desires like hatred generate the drive for annihilation and aggressive tendencies. The drive for self-preservation expresses itself in many ways as the desire for fame, power, status, and admiration by others, narcissism, etc. Hegel also has claimed that “self-consciousness is desire” (Pippin 30). Entertaining the self-preservation, Tilo also claims that, “One more thing is mine. My name which is Tilo, short for Tilottama, for I am named after the sun-burnished sesame seed, spice of nourishment. They do not know this, my customers, nor that earlier I had other names” (MS 5). The drive for sensuous gratification goes beyond genital or sexual pleasure, and explains the need for excitement, diversion, exposure to novel stimuli and a wide variety of other pleasures. The drive for annihilation involves aggressive behaviour, suicide and violent short-cuts to remove painful stimuli.

This aspect of craving- the instinct for self-preservation- involves greed (*lobha*), generates the desire to gratify the senses through *kama-raga* and *kama-tanha*, and also the egoistic drives of *bhava-raga* and *bhava-tanha*. The egoistic drives are fed by false beliefs and illusions referred to as *ditthi*, and these false beliefs are fed in their turn by the egoistic desires, so that they emerge as rationalisations. The ego desires can be analysed in terms of the craving for self-preservation *bhava-tanha*.



My mother and father dared not voice their anger, for they were afraid of my power. But they also loved the luxury-life it brought them. And when I read this in their eyes I felt disdain, and a bile-black triumph that churned in my belly because I who had been last was now first. There was something else too, a deep wordless sorrow, but I pushed it away and would not look at it. (MS 9).

The craving for diverse selfish pursuits is deeply rooted in the beliefs and ideological components referred to under the blanket heading of the dogma of personal immortality (*sassata-ditthi*). "We tend to believe in a pure ego existing independently of the psycho-physiological processes that constitute life. This 'pure ego' is believed to exist as an entity which continues even after the decay of the body" (De Silva 64). The bias towards egocentricity (rooted in wrong belief in an abiding ego-entity) manifests itself at various levels- linguistic, emotional, intellectual, ethical, and so on. The acquisitive and possessive personality structure of the egocentric person has a threefold base in craving (*tanha*), conceit (*mana*) and the false views (*ditthi*). This erroneous concept of the self is induced by craving manifesting itself in the linguistic form, 'This is mine', conceit manifesting itself in the linguistic form 'This is am' and false views in the form of 'This is myself'. Such false views, craving and conceit can emerge in relation to body, feeling, perception, dispositions and consciousness.

From this process of the mutual nourishment of the intellectual and the affective roots of egocentricity emerge the diverse manifestations of egoistic behaviour- the desire for self-preservation, self-continuity, self-assertion (power), fame, self-display, etc. The drive for self-preservation has both physiological and psychological elements; some basic needs like the need for fresh air, water, food and sleep are necessary for survival. To remain alive a person needs water, food and rest and these are not considered by the Buddha as an expression of craving. The concept of *bhava-tanha* is also linked with other strong desires like the drive for power, status and prestige. The dividing lines between a healthy achievement motive and the goals of compensation, inferiority feelings and self-conceit can be worked out on the classification of psychological states made by the Buddha. Self-conceit according to the Buddha can take three forms: 'I am superior to others' (*seyyo 'ham asmitimana*), 'I am equal to others' (*sadiso 'ham asmitimana*), 'I am inferior to others' (*hino 'ham asmitimana*). *Mana* is one of the fetters that bind man to the ills of existence, and it varies from a crude feeling of pride to a subtle feeling of distinctiveness that prevails until the attainment of arahatship (sainthood). A person can be proud of his physical appearance or his attainments. He might also feel infuriated when someone laughs at his appearance or looks down on his position and status. If a person underestimates his attainments or becomes disgusted with his own 'image of himself', feelings of inferiority are excited. The phenomenon referred to in clinical situations as 'depression' is related to a feeling of 'lack of worth' on the part of a person. The ego is also like an easily tipped canoe and an egoistic person is highly sensitive to remarks or actions calculated to belittle him. In fact 'wounded narcissism' has the potential to rouse a person's aggressive and hostile nature. In general the disturbance of a person's vanity can give way to either ego collapse and depression or anger and fury. When one's anger cannot be vented on an object or person in the external world, it can be directed against oneself and emerge in some of the subtle manifestations of self-hatred. As Tilo says:

"I Tilo am no goddess but an ordinary woman only. Yes, I admit it, this truth I have tried to escape all my life. And though once I thought I could save the world, I see now that I have only brought brief happiness into a few lives. And yet, is that not enough". (MS 298)

A person subject to constant feelings of vanity and pride may be described in the terminology of Freud as a 'narcissistic person'. As Horney points out, the root of the narcissistic character-structure is a sense of self-inflation rather than self-love, with a need not for love but for the admiration of others. In the final analysis the potential for sensory, verbal and ideational stimuli to excite a sense of 'ego-injury' or 'ego-elation' will be there as long as the dormant proclivity to vain conceits and pride (*mananusaya*) exists. Those people who are untrained in the doctrine of the Buddha, 'regard body as the self, they regard the self as having a body, body as being in the self, the self as being in the body. "I am the body", say they, "body is mine", and are possessed by this idea'. (De Silva 67) the Buddha also says that due to excessive attachment to the body, when it alters and changes, sorrow and grief set in, thus bringing out a link between the doctrines of egolessness and suffering. Towards the end Tilo gets disillusioned and understands her real self:

Now you must help me find a new name. My Tilo life is over, and with it that way of calling myself.' 'What kind of name do you want? 'One that spans my land and yours, India and America, for I belong to both now. Is there such a name?' 'Maya, dear one,' he says against my ear. How different this naming is from my last. No pearled island light, no sister-Mistresses to circle me, no First Mother to give her blessing. (*MS* 317)

Though Buddhism psychology does not uphold a kind of Freudian 'death-wish', it does trace the destructive urges to the root hatred (*dosa*). When this root hate is excited the individual is disposed to exhibit behaviour of an aggressive sort. At the initial stage, there is a desire to avoid situations we dislike, and when this is not possible there is excited in us an urge to destroy objects and persons we do not like. Painful sensations excite dormant hatred. Unlike Freud, the Buddha would consider self-destruction and suicidal tendencies as 'reactive' rather than 'appetitive'. It is when one fails to vent one's anger on objects or person's in the external world that it is deflected towards one self, as in diverse forms of self-inflicted torture and suicide. The ignorant person when attracted by pleasant objects hankers after them and is flattered by success, but when touched by painful stimuli and failure he becomes infuriated and aggressive or dejected and depressed. When violent methods of getting rid of unpleasant stimuli fail, the venom is directed towards oneself:

For crazed they stab themselves with daggers,  
In desperation swallow poison,  
Perish hanged by rope, or fling  
Themselves over a precipice. (De Silva 69)

The desire for annihilation and the belief that there is self-entity that is annihilated at death are two psychological states that nourish each other. The desire for annihilation can of course rest on two kinds of base- a carefree pleasure-lover or a Don Juan without any respect for ethics who sees death as the end of life and attempting suicide. The second base is the one which is psychologically closer to *vibhava-tanha*, for a pleasure lover would wish for self-continuity and prolongation of life. If life is unbearable and disgusting, and if there is no life after death, suicide is a logical solution to one's emotional predicament. Though the psychology of Buddhism does not accept a death wish in Freudian sense, it does accommodate the existence of aggressive and hostile tendencies in man. Destructive and hostile impulses from the root hate, and the existence of dormant hatred at a subterranean level is suggested by the concept of *patighanusaya*. The craving for self-preservation and the craving for annihilation are merely the two sides of the same coin. That such contradictory attitudes like narcissistic self-love and co-existing self-hatred and ambivalent desires like the urge to live and the urge to die stem from a basic ego-illusion is one of the most subtle psychological discoveries of the Buddha. He who inflicts

torture on his body with the aim of destroying it as well as the one who adorns and beautifies it are both running in the same vicious circle as the dog tied to the post. It has been observed of both the eternalist and the annihilationist that the 'former ran after his shadow', while 'the latter try in vain to outstrip it, both being equally obsessed to take it to be real. "Mistress who was, when you accepted our punishment in your heart without battling it, that was enough. Having readied your mind to suffer, you did not need to undergo that suffering in body also" (MS 305).

The role of aggression turned against the self, self-torture, asceticism, suicide, etc. in religious contexts has been studied by western psychologists. If the Buddha was critical of the 'narcissistic' character he was equally critical of the 'nemesistic' type where aggression is turned against the self, and his doctrines steers clear of such extremes as self-punishing asceticism. Those who attempt suicide as an escape from suffering are subject to the annihilationist delusion. "Destruction of one's body does not put an end to one's suffering, for a person is liable to be born again. And heightened and impatient forms of self-torture do not offer release from suffering; in the very anxiety to put an end to a suffering a person becomes subject to the craving for annihilation" (De Silva 71). During the time of the Buddha there were some religious teachers who upheld that the mortification of the body would result in the refining of the soul. Gotama tried the method of the path of self-mortification for eight long years and rejected, and his way offers a striking contrast to the methods of self-mortification practised by the *Jains*. The deliberate attempt to live through painful experiences and the technique of burning the past effects *kamma* were condemned by the Buddha, who saw some of these methods as the expression of craving and deflected aggression. He also condemned forms of punitive asceticism which required self-inflicted punishments for guilt in the form of penances, considering all violent attempts to deal with the problem of human suffering as lacking in insight and being subject to the delusion of the ego in a subtle form. There is the path of renunciation of the monk in search of complete peace and quietude, and there is that of the layman who has made a compromise with life. While the recluse seeking ultimate release from suffering will obtain inner peace (*ajjhata-santi*) (De Silva 32) the righteous householder's aim is harmonious living (*samācariya*) (De Silva 32). The latter is the concept of the well-adjusted man, who seeks a balance life, avoids excess, exercises a degree of restraint and is content with the satisfaction of limited wants. He practices regular self-analysis, helps other people and generates the seeds of peace and harmony necessary for healthy community life.

In the final analysis the development of a spiritual dimension, where meditational practice aims at a higher level of consciousness, has not been absorbed by western psychologists. Though some of them are interested in measuring the impact of meditation on man's bodily processes as well as the psychological condition, no significant impact has been seen in the field of psychotherapy. Freud sought only a limited and attainable ideal of happiness. In fact, he even says that his aim was to 'transform hysterical misery into common unhappiness', and also says that he was not devising a scheme to rub away all conflicts and passions from a person's mind. Analysis, according to Freud, does not make pathological reactions impossible but stimulates the freedom to develop personal autonomy which will make the emergence of pathological reactions unlikely. The Buddhist model of liberation emphasizes freedom from self-centred craving. When Tilo gets impelled by the self-destructive urge and entangled in her thoughts, she hears the voice, "Mistress who was, when you accepted our punishment in your heart without battling it, that was enough. Having readied your mind to suffer, you did not need to undergo that suffering in body also" (MS 305). When Raven admits his love to Tilo, the amalgamation of two distinct cultures occurs, "And all the time, you know what I was thinking? Please God, let her be OK. If someone has to get hurt, let it be me. I don't remember thinking something so intensely ever in my life. . . . 'It's new for me too, thinking of someone before myself, not really seeing them as separate from me' . . . Finally he adds, very soft, 'I guess that's what

love is” (MS 309). Within the Christian faith, desire is seen as something that can either lead a person towards God and destiny or away from Him. Desire is not considered to be a bad thing; rather it is a powerful force within the human that once submitted to the Lordship of Christ can become a wonderful tool for good, for advancement and for abundant living. Finally Tilo urges Raven that:

It wouldn't work, Raven. Even if we found your special place'. I take a deep breath, then say it. Because there is no earthly paradise. Except what we can make back there, in the soot in the rubble in the crisped-away flesh. . . . 'Are you sure? It'll be difficult. I don't want you to regret it later'. He laughs a gritty laugh. I'm not sure at all. I'll probably regret it later a hundred times over even before we reach Oakland'. (MS 316)

## CONCLUSIONS

Largely allegorical and mythic in structure, this novel does not repudiate the social; instead, it makes a case for the integration of the sacred and the social aspects of life. Tracing the protagonist's development through her various incarnations as Nayantara, Bhagyavati, Tilo and finally Maya, the author dramatizes the conflict between the community and the individual and transforms the feminine into an empowered individual in connection with the community. Thus the study between Buddhism and psychoanalysis provides a confrontation between two contrary pathways to liberation. Contemporary psychoanalytic practice in many respects embodies the Western values of democratic individualism. Liberation in this model tends to be associated with personal freedom while the Buddhist model of liberation emphasizes freedom from self-centered craving. Raven stands for the Western individualism while Tilottama supports her idealized views of helping others. As Raven suggests her, “You've been helping people all your life. Isn't it time you did something different, something for yourself? . . . . 'What about the earthly paradise?'” (MS 314), Tilottama argues further, “Because there is no earthly paradise. Except what we can make back there, in the soot in the rubble in the crisped away flesh” (MS 315). Finally Tilo understands her motive which leads to the union of the two lovers and along with it the union of two ideologies, cultures and nations also takes place. This has been depicted in the novel as,

Is it not burden enough, the thought that I must spend my remaining life alone. Raven nods in response to the disbelief in my eye. 'That's right. You heard me.' 'Are you sure? It'll be difficult. I don't want you to regret it later.' He laughs a gritty laugh. 'I'm not sure at all. I'll probably regret it a hundred times over even before we reach Oakland.' 'But?' 'But,' he says. And then i am holding him tight, laughing against his mouth. We kiss, a long, long kiss. . . . Later I say, 'Now you must help me find a new name. My Tilo life is over, and with it that way of calling myself.' 'What kind of name do you want?' 'One that spans my land and yours, India and America, for I belong to both now. Is there such a name?' (MS 316)

In the end it can be stated that the study establishes the union of the Eastern philosophy of Buddhism which has two levels: first is the ascetic who renounces the world will seek the high goal of utter quietude and peace; the householder who makes a compromise with living and would find a life of complete renunciation impossible or difficult will seek the ideal of harmonious and righteous living (*samacariya dhammacariya*) (De Silva 78), with that of the western philosophy and approach which establishes the fact of the completion and accomplishment of the human desires as well as of personal

freedom for helping man to be free from his inbuilt anxiety. And it has been perceived that Psychoanalysis and Buddhism each have something rare and vital to contribute to the challenges and difficulties of living in our world. Moreover the capacity of these two wisdom traditions to help us live with greater self-awareness, self-acceptance, care, compassion, morality, and freedom, is essential in a world pervaded by self-blindness, self hatred, powerlessness, and alienation.

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